



2015 United Nations Forum on
Business and Human Rights
Geneva · 16 – 18 November

*“Tracking progress and
ensuring coherence”*

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

DRAFT 3 JULY 2015

The Fourth Annual United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights will take place from 16 to 18 November 2015 in Geneva, Switzerland.

Context: convergence of agendas

The powerful idea that the dignity of every person must be respected and protected is recognized across the world and anchored in international and national human rights law. While human rights traditionally focuses on the obligations of States, the growing role of business in society has led to an increasing recognition of the human rights responsibilities of business enterprises. This recognition is at the centre of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

The Guiding Principles bridge the human rights and the business worlds. Adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2011, they provide the authoritative global reference point on business and human rights, around which other international standards and initiatives on responsible business conduct have started to converge. An increasing number of States are taking steps to develop national action plans on business and human rights. A growing number of companies are becoming aware of and taking steps to implement the Guiding Principles. These are encouraging developments. At the same time, much remains to be done to translate policy statements and commitments into action and to ensure access to effective remedies for victims of corporate-related human rights abuse.

The Guiding Principles provide the global standard of practice that is now expected of all States and businesses with regard to business and human rights and clarify how to implement the three pillars of the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework:

1. The State duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including business, through appropriate policies, regulation, and adjudication;
2. An independent corporate responsibility to respect human rights, meaning that business enterprises should act with due diligence to avoid infringing on the rights of others and to address adverse impacts with which they are involved;
3. Greater access by victims to effective remedy, through both judicial and non-judicial grievance mechanisms.

Aims of the annual Forum

The annual Forum on Business and Human Rights aims to reinforce linkages between the business and human rights worlds. Pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 17/4 and 26/22, the Forum seeks to promote dialogue and cooperation on issues linked to business and human rights and the implementation of the Guiding Principles, including challenges faced in particular sectors, operational environments or in relation to specific rights or groups, as well as identify good practices. By doing so, the Annual Forum also aims to facilitate the development of a common vision for the global business and human rights agenda.

The 2015 annual Forum

"Tracking progress and ensuring coherence" is the theme of the 2015 Forum. The Forum will identify ways to effectively track progress, promote policy coherence and achieve faster change on the ground for rights-holders. Discussions will delve into six key substantive themes that address all three pillars of the Guiding Principles: **the State duty to protect human rights, the corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and the need for access to effective remedy for victims.** Several sessions cut across these themes:

- **Efforts to track performance and progress**, examining recent initiatives to map progress in State and business implementation of the Guiding Principles, to promote reporting, and to ranking or benchmark practice of States and companies.
- **Policy coherence in global governance frameworks**, exploring practical implications of the Guiding Principles for policies related to trade, investment and sustainable development and opportunities for improved policy coherence.
- **Policy and practice coherence at national level**, exploring emerging practices, challenges and opportunities, including the increasing trend of developing national action plans on business and human rights as well as a focus on State-owned enterprises and economic activities controlled by the State.
- **Corporate respect for human rights in practice**, exploring how companies can effectively prevent and address adverse impacts on human rights, with a particular focus on human rights due diligence, sector specific challenges and supply chain issues.
- **Groups at risk**, learning from groups that have been at particular at risk of business-related human rights abuses and exploring good practice responses.
- **Access to effective remedy**, examining trends and innovative ways to strengthen access to remedy for victims, both through judicial and non-judicial mechanisms.

The Forum will also include discussions on the integration of the Guiding Principles in the organization of **mega sporting events**. A cross-cutting topic involves **multi-stakeholder engagement** between States, business, civil society and affected stakeholders across all three pillars of the Guiding Principles. A number of parallel sessions organized by external stakeholders will complement UN-led sessions on the topics listed above and address key trends and issues related to specific rights, groups, sectors and operational contexts. High-level plenary sessions will provide leadership perspectives on the business and human rights agenda and current global trends.

Format

The Forum is a multi-stakeholder event under the guidance of the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights and organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It is the largest global multi-stakeholder gathering on the topic of business and human rights, with 2,000 persons registered participants in 2014.

The programme comprises high-level plenary sessions and parallel sessions that are organized by the Working Group and OHCHR as well as by external stakeholders. For the 2015 Forum, the Secretariat received more than 140 proposals for thematic sessions from external stakeholders, covering a vast array of issues and perspectives. The Forum Secretariat has sought to accommodate as many proposals for externally-organized parallel events as possible in line with the inclusive nature of the Forum. The Working Group and OHCHR are not responsible for the content and organization of these externally-organized sessions.

All stakeholder groups (States, civil society, business, inter-governmental organizations, etc.) participate on an equal footing. Bringing together such different perspectives, the Forum offers a unique opportunity for constructive solution-oriented discussions and respectful dialogue.

Interpretation

Sessions organized by the Working Group on Business and Human Rights and OHCHR will have interpretation in English, French and Spanish. The opening and closing plenary sessions will have interpretation in Arabic, Chinese and Russian. Interpretation in other sessions is subject to arrangements made by the external organizers.

Draft programme outline (the schedule for listed topics may change)

(White colour: sessions organized by external stakeholders. Further details about these will be posted as soon as possible. Blue-coloured sessions are led by the Working Group and/or OHCHR). ◻ indicates the thematic “tags” of a session.

16 November			
09:00-10:00	Welcome coffee		
10:00-11:30	<p>Updates by international organizations with close interface to the UN Guiding Principles: opportunities for further alignment and convergence</p> <p>◻ Policy coherence global governance</p>	<p>The UN Guiding Principles for newcomers – Introductory presentation on their background, key features and implications</p>	<p>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of “multipliers”: academia, lawyers and bar associations, and national human rights institutions
11:30-11:45	Break		
11:45-13:15	<p>Tracking corporate implementation of the Guiding Principles</p> <p>◻ Tracking performance and progress on the Guiding Principles</p>	<p>The interface between judicial and non-judicial remedy: Experiences and challenges</p> <p>◻ Access to remedy</p>	<p>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International investment arbitration and human rights • Extractive industries and indigenous peoples • Human rights and the ICT sector
13:15-14:45	Lunch break		
14:45-16:15	<p>Tracking State implementation of the Guiding Principles</p> <p>◻ Tracking performance and progress on the Guiding Principles</p>	<p>Community engagement and affected stakeholders</p> <p>◻ Groups at risk ◻ Policy coherence national level ◻ Corporate respect in practice</p>	<p>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights due diligence approaches across sectors • Sustainable agriculture supply chains • Innovative approaches to access to remedy
16:15-16:30	Break		
16:30-18:00	<p>Sector-specific challenges in achieving effective access to remedy</p> <p>◻ Access to remedy ◻ Corporate respect in practice</p>	<p>Human rights defenders and civic space in the context of business</p> <p>◻ Groups at risk ◻ Policy coherence national level ◻ Corporate respect in practice</p>	<p>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective company-level grievance mechanisms • Recruitment practices and migrant workers • Public procurement
18:00-19:30	<p>Evening sessions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of academic journal • Other events tbc 		

17 November		
08:00-09:00	Welcome coffee	
09:00-13:15	<p>Opening high-level plenary in the Assembly Hall</p> <p>Part I: Welcome remarks by the Human Rights Council President, the Forum Chairperson, the High Commissioner and the Working Group</p> <p>Part II: Global outlook on business and human rights – Trends and opportunities for faster progress</p> <p>Part III: Leadership views on business and human rights: Addressing key global challenges and capitalizing on opportunities for progress</p>	
13:15-14:45	Lunch break	
14:45-16:15	<p>National action plans on business and human rights: challenges and lessons learned</p> <p>⊞ Policy coherence national level</p>	<p>Multi-stakeholder engagement across all three pillars (case studies)</p> <p>⊞ Corporate respect in practice</p> <p>⊞ Policy coherence national level</p> <p>⊞ Groups at risk</p>
	<p>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company-community relations in complex environments • Non-judicial remedy: lessons from case studies • The Guiding Principles, trade and investment 	
16:15-16:30	Break	
16:30-18:00	<p>Mega-sport events and human rights</p> <p>⊞ Corporate respect in practice</p> <p>⊞ Policy coherence national level</p>	<p>Multi-stakeholder consultation on OHCHR's accountability and remedy project</p> <p>⊞ Access to remedy</p> <p>⊞ Policy coherence national level</p>
	<p>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights impact assessments – sectoral and multistakeholder approaches • National action plans • Human rights in supply chains 	
	Evening events tbc	

18 November			
08:15-09:45	<p><i>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>International financial institutions and human rights</i> • <i>Children's rights and business</i> • <i>Innovative approaches in company-community dispute resolution</i> • <i>Whistleblowing and the Guiding Principles</i> • <i>"Corporate capture", corruption and transparency</i> 		
09:45-10:00	Break		
10:00-11:30	<p>Integrating human rights in State-owned enterprises and other business controlled by the State - Challenges and lessons learned</p> <p>△ <i>Policy coherence national level</i></p>	<p>Protecting and defending the rights of women</p> <p>△ <i>Groups at risk</i> △ <i>Policy coherence national level</i> △ <i>Corporate respect in practice</i></p>	<p><i>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stakeholder perspectives on a business and human rights treaty</i> • <i>Corporate culture and the business case for human rights</i> • <i>Climate justice</i>
11:30-11:45	Break		
11:45-13:15	<p>State implementation of the Guiding Principles in the context of investment policy</p> <p>△ <i>Policy coherence national level and global governance</i></p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities of interested states in cross-border cases</p> <p>△ <i>Access to remedy</i> △ <i>Policy coherence national level and global governance</i></p>	<p><i>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Conflict areas and due diligence</i> • <i>Supply chain responsibility in the garment sector</i> • <i>Human rights reporting and assurance</i>
13:15-14:45	Lunch break		
14:45-16:15	<p>The SDGs, the private sector and the Guiding Principles</p> <p>△ <i>Policy coherence national level and global governance</i> △ <i>Corporate respect in practice</i></p>	<p>Multi-stakeholder engagement across all three pillars (case studies)</p> <p>△ <i>Corporate respect in practice</i> △ <i>Policy coherence national level</i> △ <i>Groups at risk</i></p>	<p><i>Parallel sessions (organized by external stakeholders)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Land investments and human rights</i> • <i>Extractive industries, complex environments and community relations</i> • <i>Human rights due diligence in law and practice</i>
16:15-16:30	Break		
16:30-17:45	<p>Closing high-level plenary session in Room XX</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Panel discussion: The sustainable development agenda, human rights and business – Connecting the dots, the role of business in development and the importance of coherence and scaling up action on the Guiding Principles</i> • <i>Closing reflections: Forum takeaways and implications for the way forward</i> 		



More information

www.ohchr.org/2015ForumBHR